

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

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FOR

"FRYING APPARATUS"

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Titl of the Invention

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“FRYING APPARATUS”

Field Of the Invention

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The present invention relates generally to a frying apparatus particularly suited for frying poultry such as a turkey, a chicken, and the like. In particular, the deep-frying apparatus of the present invention comprises a cooking container, a supporting stand, and a shield securely abutting and adjoining the top of the cooking container. The frying apparatus further includes securing
15 straps connecting on one end to the cooking container and, on the other end, connecting to the supporting stand such that the cooking container is stably positioned onto the stand of the frying apparatus.

Background of the Invention

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Conventional food fryers are well known in the prior art. Typical deep-fryers include a container in which oil is heated and a poultry rack or food support on which food items are placed and then lowered into the container of heated oil for cooking. For example, the Turkey Fryer Complete Kit available at www.turkey-fryer-online.com consists of a fryer pot having a capacity of from 26
25 quarts to 32 quarts, a lid, a poultry rack or basket, and a stand having a burner as a source for heating the oil to a sufficient temperature for frying a turkey.

Although deep-fat fryers have become increasingly popular as a way to cook turkey, chicken, and even seafood, they have been increasingly criticized as a safety hazard. One serious problem with conventional fryers, for example, may result when an operator puts a turkey or other food item into heated oil typically reaching a temperature of 350 degrees F. or more. When inserting frozen or partially-frozen food items or items containing moisture into the hot oil, the high temperature causes the moisture to flash off the food items resulting in bubbling-up of the oil and potentially a spill-over of the hot oil into the flames of the burner unit. The spill-over of even a small amount of oil into the flames can result in a disastrous fire.

Underwriter's Laboratories (UL), an independent non-profit product safety testing laboratory, found another major problem associated with conventional turkey fryers. Conventional containers are not stably attached to their support stands, thereby allowing the container to easily separate from the stand and tip over permitting oil to spill out. If the oil is hot, the operator and anyone nearby could be severely burned. UL was so concerned about this and the other potential safety problems of conventional turkey fryers that they refused to certify the entire product line – an action never before taken by the group (see www.wral.com/money/1565168/detail.html, July 18, 2002).

B Because of these deficiencies and others inherent in conventional turkey fryers, it would be advantageous to provide a frying apparatus having increased

stability especially one having a means for decreasing or preventing oil splatters from spilling-over onto the burner units.

Summary of the Invention

5 Briefly described, the present invention relates to a deep-frying apparatus comprising a cooking container for containing oil or the like for cooking a turkey, a chicken, or seafood; a shield for shielding the operator from oil splatters and preventing the over-spill of the oil from the cooking container; a supporting stand for holding the cooking container and further for providing a source for heating
10 the oil or other cooking medium to a temperature suitable for cooking the food item; and a plurality of securing straps for securing the cooking container to the supporting stand such that the cooking container is stably positioned onto the supporting stand of the frying apparatus.

15 In one embodiment of the present invention, a shield is provided that is adapted for use with existing cooking containers suitable for the high temperature heating of the desired cooking medium, such as oil, and having dimensions such that the shield may be easily inserted into, and removed from, the cooking container and, when inserted, securely adjoins and abuts the upper edge of the
20 cooking container so that oil does not spill between the lower edge of the shield and the upper edge of the container. The shield further comprises a ring-shaped top surface partially extending across the open end of the cooking container such that oil is prevented from splattering up and spilling-over the top of the cooking

container. In one embodiment of a shield made according to the present invention, the top surface of the shield extends in a horizontal plane across the top surface of the cooking container and is perpendicular to the vertical axis of the container. However, also contemplated to be encompassed with in the scope
5 of the present invention is a shield having a ring-shaped top surface that slants downwardly as it extends across the top of the cooking container thereby causing oil that splatters or spills on the top surface of the shield to flow downwardly into the cooking container by means of gravity, thereby preventing the over-spill of the oil down the sides of the container.

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Another embodiment of a frying apparatus made according to the present invention provides a cooking container having a shield as an integral part of the cooking container, such that the container and shield are made as one piece.

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Yet another embodiment of a frying apparatus made in accordance with the present invention contemplates a cooking container having a shield and, further comprising a supporting stand capable of removeably receiving the cooking container and useful for increasing the stability of the frying apparatus. A frying apparatus made according to this embodiment may further comprise a
20 plurality of supporting straps to aid in stabilizing the positioning of the cooking container onto the supporting stand and thereby reducing the possibility the cooking container will be unintentionally knocked off of the supporting stand.

These and other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent upon review of the detailed description set forth below when taken in conjunction with the accompanying figures, which are briefly described as follows.

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Brief Description of the Figures

A full and enabling disclosure of the present invention, including the best mode thereof, to one of ordinary skill in the art, is set forth more particularly in the remainder of the specification, including reference to the accompanying figures,
10 wherein:

Figure 1 illustrates a frying apparatus generally made in accordance with the present invention and comprising a cooking container for containing oil for cooking a food item; a shield for shielding the operator from oil splatters and preventing the over-spill of the oil from the cooking container; a supporting stand
15 for holding the cooking container and a plurality of securing straps for securing the cooking container to the supporting stand such that the cooking container is stably positioned onto the supporting stand of the frying apparatus;

Figure 2 illustrates one embodiment of a frying apparatus made in accordance with the present invention wherein **Fig. 2A and 2B** show a detailed view of a shield for use with an existing cooking container and having dimensions such that the shield, when inserted into the conventional cooking container as
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illustrated in **Fig. 2C**, securely adjoins and abuts the upper edge of the cooking container; and

Figure 3 illustrates another embodiment of a frying apparatus made in accordance with the present invention and comprising a shield configured as an integral part of the cooking container such that the container and shield are made as one piece. **Fig. 3A** depicts a side view of this embodiment while a top view is depicted in **Fig. 3B**.

Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments

Other objects, features and aspects of the present invention are disclosed in, or are obvious from, the following Detailed Description. It is to be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the present discussion is a description of exemplary embodiments only and is not intended as limiting the broader aspects of the present invention, which broader aspects are embodied in the exemplary construction. In fact, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the present invention without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention. For instance, features illustrated or described as part of one embodiment can be used in another embodiment to yield a still further embodiment. It is intended that the present invention cover such modifications and variations as come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

For convenience, certain terms employed in the Specification, Examples, and appended Claims are collected here.

As used herein, terms such as "horizontal" and "vertical" are not intended
5 to be strictly construed in describing the invention. A "horizontal" member could have only a general horizontal configuration and a "vertical" member could have only a general vertical configuration.

As used herein, the term "a" should be construed as one or more.
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The present invention generally provides a deep-frying apparatus comprising a cooking container for containing oil for cooking a turkey, a chicken, or seafood; a shield for shielding the operator from oil splatters and preventing the over-spill of the oil from the cooking container; a supporting stand for holding
15 the cooking container; and a plurality of securing straps for securing the cooking container to the supporting stand such that the cooking container is stably positioned onto the supporting stand of the frying apparatus.

One embodiment of a frying apparatus made in accordance with the
20 present invention is broadly illustrated in **Fig. 1**. Frying apparatus **10** generally comprises cooking container **20** for holding oil or other cooking medium for cooking a turkey or other food item; shield **30** configured to reduce or prevent the overspill of oil from the cooking container; supporting stand **40** for holding the

cooking container and further for providing a source for heating the oil to a temperature suitable for cooking the food item; and a plurality of securing straps 50 for securing the cooking container to the supporting stand such that the cooking container is stably positioned onto the supporting stand. Optionally, the 5 frying apparatus may further comprise a handle, generally indicated as 31 and positioned on cooking container 20, shield 30, or both.

Cooking container 20 is generally cylindrical in shape and comprises a bottom surface 22 and a sidewall 24 that extends upwardly from the bottom 10 surface 22 to a top edge 26 of the sidewall 24. The bottom surface 22 and sidewall 24 define interior opening 28 of cooking container 20.

Frying apparatus 10 of the present invention may further comprise a supporting stand 40 extending downwardly from the cooking container 20 as 15 illustrated, for example, in **Fig. 1**. Supporting stand 40 may be configured to removably receive cooking container 20 or, alternately, may be attached to cooking container 20. One embodiment of supporting stand 40, for example, is configured to have at least three legs disposed around cooking container 20 thereby providing stability to frying apparatus 10. An alternate embodiment of 20 the present invention contemplates supporting stand 40 comprising receptacle 41 for receiving cooking container 20; a stabilizer ring 43 for stabilizing the supporting stand, and a plurality of struts 42 connecting the stabilizer ring to the receptacle. However it should be understood that any conventional means of

support capable of supporting cooking container **20** and configured to increase the stability of frying apparatus **10** may be used in a fryer apparatus without departing from the scope of the present invention.

5 Also as generally illustrated in **Fig. 1**, frying apparatus **10** further comprises a plurality of securing straps **50**, each strap having a first end **51** and a second end **53**, each strap further comprising a means of attachment at both first end **51** and the second **53** such that a first means of attachment **52** on first end **51** of supporting strap **50** attaches to a first receptacle **55** on the frying apparatus
10 of the present invention. In one embodiment, first receptacle **55** is positioned on cooking container **20**, however, the present invention also contemplates first receptacle **55** to be attached to shield **30**. A second means of attachment **54** on second end **53** of each of securing straps **50** attaches to second receptacle **56** on supporting stand **40**, thereby stabilizing the positioning of cooking container
15 **20** onto supporting stand **40**.

Attachment means **52** and **54** may comprise any conventionally known means of attachment such as, but not limited to, a J-shaped hook, a U-shaped hook, a clip, and the like. It should also be recognized that, while attachment
20 means **52** may be of the same type as attachment means **54**, the present invention also contemplates that attachment means **52** may be of a different type from that used as attachment means **54**. Similarly, first receptacle **55** and second receptacle **56** may comprise any complementary shape that is selectively

connectable to attachment means **52** and attachment means **54**, respectively. For example, one type of receptacle useful in the present invention is an inverted U-shaped hook, however, there can be any number of receptacles and selectively connectable attachment means without departing from the scope of
5 the present invention.

Referring now to **Fig. 2A**, shield **30** is generally illustrated and comprises an upper portion **32** and a lower portion **33**, wherein the upper portion **32** comprises a sidewall **34** having a lower edge **35** and a bottom **36**, said bottom **36**
10 having a traversing hole **29**, an upper surface **37** connected to the lower edge **35** of side wall **34**, and a lower surface **38**. In one embodiment of the present invention, illustrated generally in **Fig. 2B**, cooking container **20** is generally configured to removably receive shield **30** such that shield **30**, when inserted into interior opening **28** of the cooking container as illustrated in **Fig. 2C**, securely
15 adjoins and abuts top edge **26** of side wall **24** of the cooking container so that oil does not spill-over between shield **30** and cooking container **20**.

Fig. 3 generally illustrates another embodiment of a frying apparatus made in accordance with the present invention, wherein shield **30** comprises a
20 unitary piece integral with cooking container **20**. As shown in greater detail in **Fig. 3A**, top edge **26** of cooking container **20** is contiguous with the lower surface **38** of shield **30** thereby providing a frying apparatus comprising a shield as an integral part of the cooking container.

Fig. 3B illustrates shield **30** in greater detail, whether the cooking container is generally configured to removably receive the shield or, as in an alternate embodiment of the present invention, the shield is provided as an integral and unitary part of the cooking container. Shield **30** is disposed relative to cooking container **20** so as upper surface **37** partially extends across interior opening **28** such that splattering up or spilling-over of the oil or other cooking medium can be reduced or prevented altogether. In one embodiment of the present invention, upper surface **37** of shield **30** is downwardly slanting toward interior opening **28** to promote oil, which has splattered or spilled-over onto the upper surface, to flow by gravity downwardly to interior opening **28** thereby reducing oil spillage.

In various embodiments of the present invention, each of the component parts of frying apparatus **10** may be constructed of metal such as, but not limited to, stainless steel, carbon steel, aluminum, and the like. However, one of skill in the art will recognize that any material may be used for construction of frying apparatus **10** that is capable of withstanding heating to a high enough temperature necessary for deep-frying food. It is also contemplated to be within scope of the present invention to have all of the components of frying apparatus **10** to be constructed of metal except securing straps **50** which, in one embodiment, are made from a non-metal, preferably heat-resistant, material such as a plastic including, but not limited to, polyethylene, polypropylene, high-

density polyethylene (HDPE), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polystyrene, and the like and combinations thereof.

While the present invention has been described with reference to specific
5 features and embodiments, such description is for illustrative purposes only. The words used are words of description rather than of limitation. For example, numerous other constructions of dispensing containers having a funnel overlay with the ability to reverse to form a funnel for dispensing the contents thereof are contemplated to be within the scope of the present invention. It is to be
10 understood that changes and variations may be made by those of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention, which is set forth in the following claims.